QUESTIONS

1.        What is the policy at your school regarding peanuts, tree nuts and their products?

2.        In your opinion, are parents, teachers and students understanding of this policy, or are they

upset by this policy?

3.       Have you seen any positive impact on allergic students?   Any negative impact (for example

bullying)?

4.       Do you feel this practice generates empathy, compassion and community in your school?

5.       Does this practice create a ‘false sense of security’ at your school?  What I mean by this is,

do teachers, students and other parents feel so at ease that they don’t monitor allergies

closely?

6.       Have there been any other appeals for the removal of other highly allergic foods (for

example dairy or gluten)?

RESPONSES

**1.** Parents with children who attend North Cedar Elementary in Cedar Falls IA. 

1) We don't have a peanut allergy at our school fortunately. I hope if there is every a peanut allergy we will handle the situation like we do with the severe dairy allergy. Rather than say "no" dairy products, we encourage kids to wash hand after eating and the girl with the milk allergy gets a new lunch partner each day to eat with in the art room. The kids love it when it's their turn. The (allergy) mom usually packs a safe lunch for both kids to eat. It's a win, win!

2) Everyone is pretty understanding with the situation. No one wants anyone to get hurt and it also lets the kids that don't have the allergy still eat/drink what they want.

3) Other kids might be more concerning with the allergic child. No, I don't see any bullying.

4) yes

5) maybe.... I think it helps a lot when you can separate them at lunch time.

6) no.... Dairy is important for kids to develop. Should not be removed from menu. Parents should not expect schools to cater to one child's needs. I think when parents expect this , resentment is created. We can all live together but maybe just not eat together ;)

**2.** Hi, Sarah.

I'm the parent of a second-grader at Cedar Heights Elementary in Cedar Falls, Iowa. He does not have any food allergies. However, we have a family friend in third grade who does, so we try to be respectful of him and other students who do.

Until last week, my son, who sometimes eat hot lunch and sometimes takes his lunch, had never taken peanut butter to school. He's not a huge fan of it, and I didn't think we needed to because of the children in the school who have allergies. But last week, he wanted to take some peanut butter crackers in his lunch, so I let him. I felt a little guilty, but I also knew that our school has rules in place to protect the kids with allergies. My son and I even talked about this one night after school. As I understand it, kids with the allergies must sit next to hot lunch kids, not cold lunch kids.

As a parent of a non-allergy kid, I like that I can take peanut butter to school if I want. However, I know that the danger exists and that is why I try to be respectful of those with allergies. Also, I can honestly say that if our school went peanut-free, I wouldn't oppose it. I'm always in favor of doing what is best for the school as a whole.

I hope I've answered your questions. If not, please feel free to contact me again. I'm happy to help in any way that I can.

**3.** I'm a parent in the Cedar Falls school district and would be happy to visit with you.  My son just outgrew his allergy, so I'm not sure what category this puts me in.

My replies are in the text below.  If you have more questions once you read my replies please let me know.

1. *What is the policy at your school regarding peanuts, tree nuts and their products?*

The school does not serve these products, but there are no restrictions for lunches brought from home or snacks.  Parents are encouraged to bring nut-free products if there is a child with an allergy in the classroom, but the enforcement of this varies from teacher to teacher.

1. *In your opinion, are parents, teachers and students (in general) understanding of this policy, or are they upset by this policy?*

Most are understanding at our school.  In my personal experience, many have gone above and beyond to make sure allergy kids are included in birthday and holiday celebrations.

1. *Have you seen any positive impact on allergic students?   Any negative impact (for example bullying)?*

I have not seen any negative impact.  Most food allergy parents are more content because the guidelines are very clear and indicate who is responsible for what.

1. *Do you feel this practice generates empathy, compassion and community in your school?*

Not really.  I think we need more education on this.

1. *Does this practice create a ‘false sense of security’ at your school?  What I mean by this is, do teachers, students and other parents feel so at ease that they don’t monitor allergies closely?*

No, which is why we decided against a peanut ban.  We felt that a district wide ban would create this false sense of security.  With peanuts still in the cafeteria, and potentially classrooms, everyone maintains their vigilance.

1. *Have there been any other appeals for the removal of other highly allergic foods (for example dairy or gluten*)?

No, none of the top 8 are banned from our schools.

**4.**

Hi Sarah,

I am the Director of Elementary Education for the Cedar Falls Schools, which means I oversee the elementary schools in our District, as well as some District responsibilities.  When we worked on our Allergy Sensitive Guidelines, we found several great resources to help us.  The best resource we found was from the National School Board Association entitled, "Safe at School and Ready to Learn:  A Comprehensive Policy Guide for Protecting Students with Life-Threatening Food Allergies."  The decision to eliminate peanut butter from the school lunch program came about during a conversation with a lawyer.  We had a parent that was concerned that we were serving peanut butter sandwiches at our secondary schools, so many students were eating peanut butter everyday.  This increased the chance that students with allergies had of coming in contact with the peanut butter, and the lawyer asked us if it was really worth it to us.   Since students were provided a hot lunch option at school and could choose to bring a peanut butter sandwich from home if they really wanted to, it was decided to eliminate the peanut butter from our lunch program.  We did not receive any complaints from parents regarding this decision.

I have copied your e-mail and sent it to a handful of parents from two of our schools.  Some of them may have already contacted you.  I am happy to answer any additional questions that you may have.  Best of luck as you continue with your plans.  
  
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Pam Zeigler

Director of Elementary Education

Cedar Falls Community Schools

**5.**

Ms. Conkle:

Thank you for your email and the inquiry about the possibility of contacting district parents to get additional information to help on the Allergy (Anaphylaxis) Management and Prevention Plan that MCPS is working on.

First of all, as you know, I can’t identify students who have allergies in any manner.  So to help you, I would be placing the district in a position of having to send an email to every parent in the school, asking them to contact you if they are willing to answer questions about their child’s peanut free status (as you stated, a possible FERPA thing).  But even more troubling for me, beyond your request, is that if I send out your email request to every parent in the district then I place the district in a position of possibly having to send out other requests, such as yours, that come to the district from anyone on a regular basis. That is something I cannot do. Therefore, I am going to decline your request.

Just so you and the other members of the MCPS committee working on this important topic, Hellgate Elementary is not truly a peanut-free school. We allow cold lunches with peanut products to come to school.  We are not prepare, at this time, to try and ban individual lunch choice decisions from parents and students. However, we try to help our allergy students at the school by providing an allergy table for impacted students and/or making the lunches ahead of time for an allergy student, and having an aide come to pick up the meal and allow impacted students to eat outside of the cafeteria. In addition, our food service does prepare food that is peanut free, to the best of my knowledge.

If I can be of any further assistance, please let me know.

Doug

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